

Measuring socioeconomic background for widening access purposes

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Indicators of socioeconomic disadvantage

Area-level indicators

POLAR Q1/Q1+2

TUNDRA Q1/Q1+2

IMD & IDACI Q1/Q1+2

ACORN 4+5

School-level indicators

School with high % FSM pupils

School with low average attainment

School with low post-16 progression

State school

Individual-level indicators

Free school meals

(Low household income)

(Care-experienced)

(Working-class background)

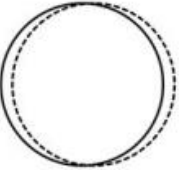
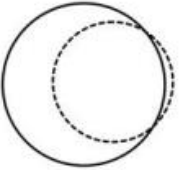
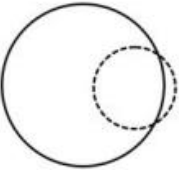
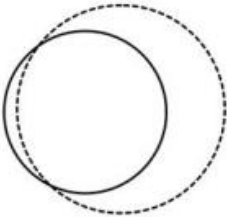
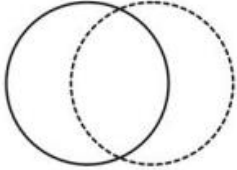
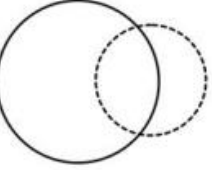
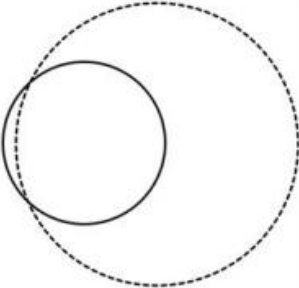
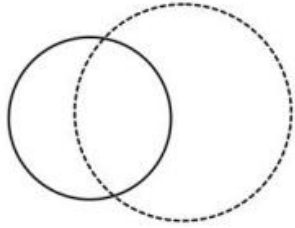
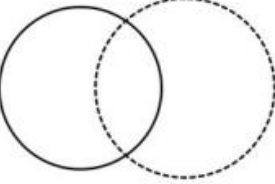
(First generation university student)

Composite indicators

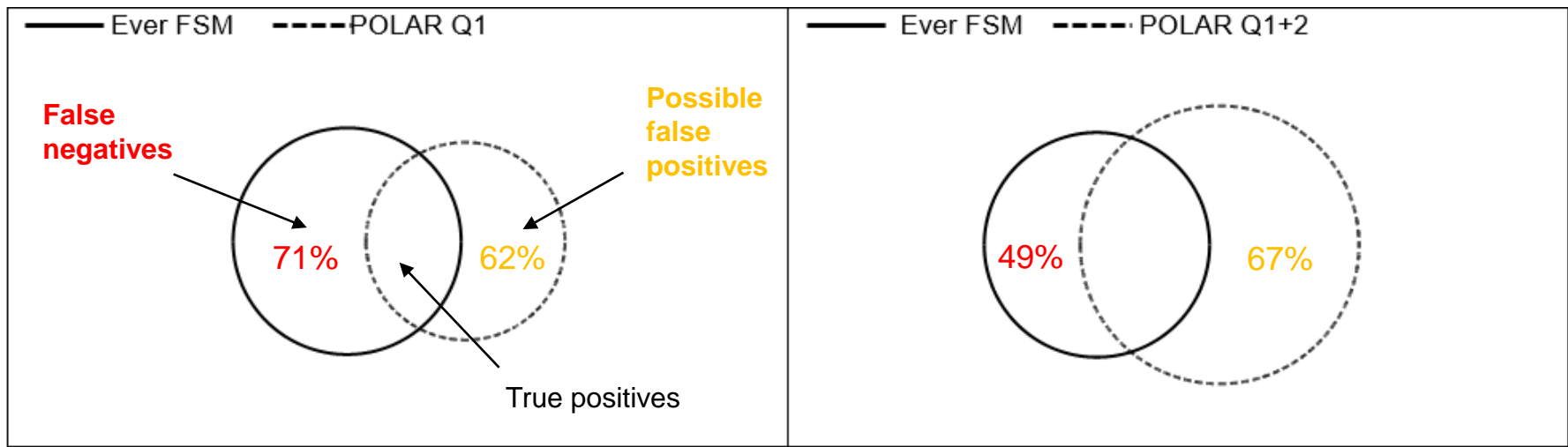
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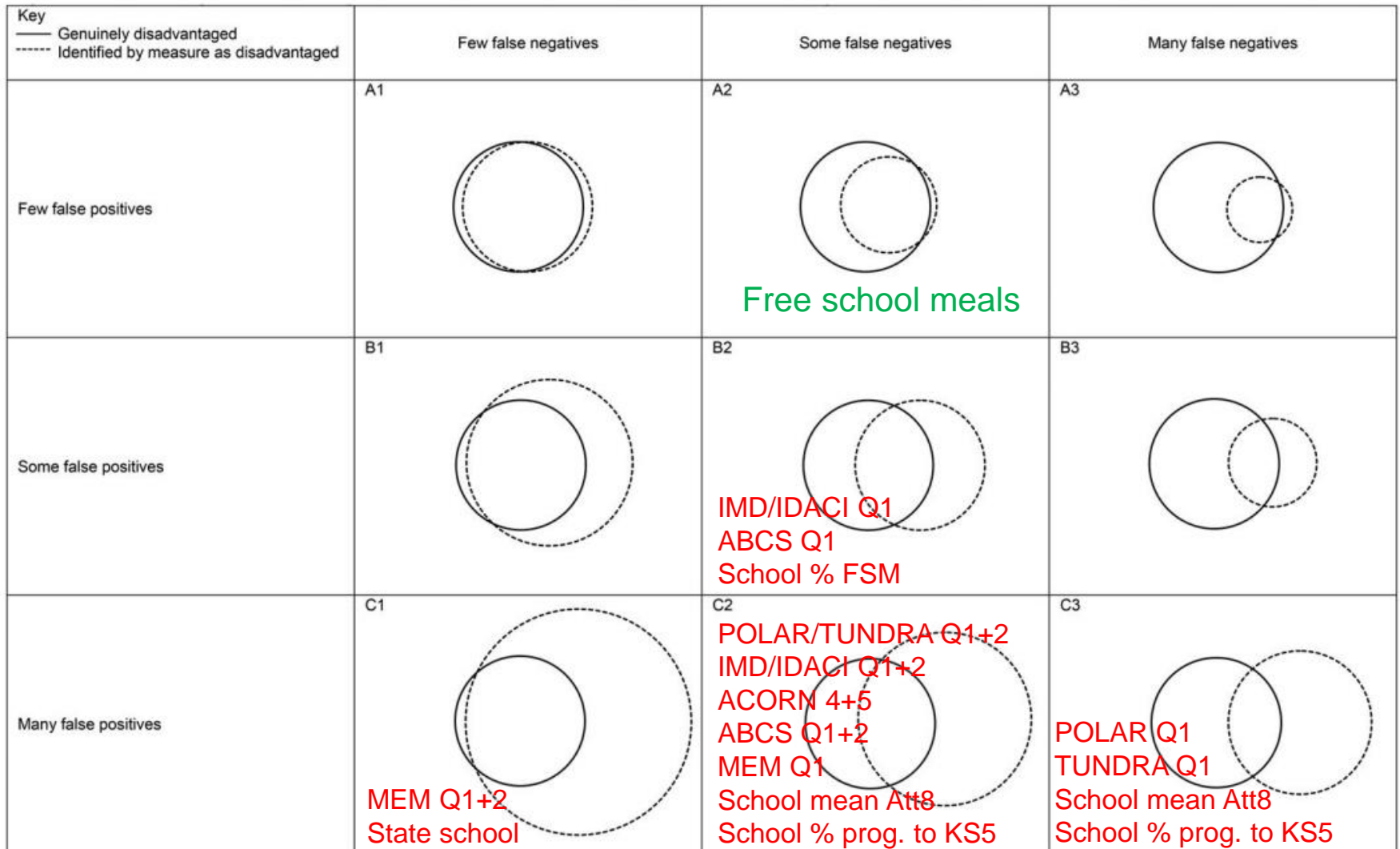
False negatives and false positives

Key — Genuinely disadvantaged - - - - - Identified by measure as disadvantaged	Few false negatives	Some false negatives	Many false negatives
Few false positives	A1 	A2  Free school meals	A3 
Some false positives	B1 	B2 	B3 
Many false positives	C1 	C2 	C3 

POLAR produces many false negatives and many possible false positives



False negatives and false positives



Implications for WP policy & practice

- Widening access interventions that rely on indicators producing many **false negatives will fail to reach many intended beneficiaries**
- Widening access interventions that rely on indicators producing many **false positives will reach many unintended beneficiaries**
- Area-level, school-level and composite indicators are **poor proxies for socioeconomic disadvantage at the individual-level**
- Need to prioritise the use of **officially verified individual-level indicators of socioeconomic disadvantage**, such as receipt of free school meals